

# *Sketch*

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## Interstate 35

Steve Barnett\*

\*Iowa State University

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looking into her dim eyes. She had been waiting for me to turn to her, and her eyes lost themselves in wrinkles as she flashed a toothless smile. All day she rests on the grain sacks in the warm *tienda*, anticipating her daily visitors.

"Fine, fine, *Gringa* . . . and how is your baby today?" Every day she asks the same question and long ago I ceased informing her that I was not married and had no baby.

"As fine as you please," I answered, squeezing her hand. I adjusted her shawl and arranged her black braid over her shoulder. Her braid was her grace; its smooth blackness fell below her waist and not one short hair was apparent.

"God bless you, *Gringa*," she whispered as her goodbye.

"He has," an inside whisper answered as I picked out my punctured tomato, cut two green bananas down from the ceiling for my ravenous parrot and gave my money to Mayla.

"I'll be over to visit you tomorrow to make French toast," Mayla announced. I had promised to teach her.

"Until tomorrow then." I smiled and stepped out into the wind. "'Bye, Pelon." I dropped a candy into his lap and called to Negra. We picked our way across the rubble.

## Interstate 35

*by Steve Barnett*

*June 27, 1944—September 15, 1967*

Street lights' shimmering  
reflections off wet pavement  
amid insistent screams  
of angry vulcanized rubber.  
A collage of sounds.

smells, colors —  
people flashing by  
as you run  
searching for —  
something you can't find  
not knowing what it is  
but peace.  
dirty intermittent white  
streaks under.  
Hell-cart.  
the bronze sickle-man,  
face pained,  
leans sadly into his appointed task.  
yellow-yield;  
amber-two dots.  
cloudy smoke-filled rooms  
clumsy music  
dimly-lit  
loud, lashing.  
Kaleidoscope.  
love me,  
love me,  
please love you  
(*Minni-aines-poltis*),  
as love calls,  
crying,  
at a door  
with broken fingernails  
embedded in it.  
I stay-waytion-smile.  
what's it all about  
when you sort it out?

stray-waytion  
light night rain  
*aines* next intercourse  
gasp nude flogging  
second night.